from India by Brazil, fall in demand in developed countries and intense competition from some of the South East Asian countries and South Korea after drastic devaluation of their currencies *vis-a-vis* US Dollar are the other important reasons for the decline.

(c) and (d) Promotion of exports has been the constant endeavour of the Government. Measures taken to boost export of engineering goods including consumer durables include various incentives under the Export-Import Policy like Duty Exemption Scheme, Export Promotion Capital Goods Scheme, Special Import Licence, Duty Drawback Scheme, DEPB Scheme, and assistance from Market Development Fund. In addition, the Government through Engineering Export Promotion Council has drawn up various promotional activities such as Buyer-Seller Meets, participation in trade fairs and exhibitions, disseminating market intelligence and export opportunities to Indian exporters, creating homepage on a number of engineering items in its internet website for making them accessible to the foreign buyers through internet.

Economic Relations with China

1228. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are of the opinion that India has a lot to gain from close relations with China, especially on economic front; and

(b) if so, what steps have been taken to ensure that India and China can work together at multi-lateral economic fora to ensure 'Globalisation does not lead to the complete erosion of national sovereignty'?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) It will be for mutual benefit if the trade relations between Indian & China improve.

(b) India and China have many similar concerns, being the two most populous and growing developing countries. Steps taken to safeguard national sovereignty, among others, include formation of a Joint Group on Economic Relations and Trade, Science & Technology, Working Groups on Coal and Steel, enhanced contacts and cooperation at the Govt. level between economic Ministers of the two countries.

As a member of the Working Group on China's Accession to the WTO, India has conveyed its support to China. India has welcomed China's interest in being part of the Bangkok Agreement and India has agreed to China's request for membership of the information group of developing countries. in GATT.

Increase in Coffee Plantation

1229. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO:
SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the fresh initiative proposed to increase coffee planation in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) whether it is a fact that there is shortage of coffee in the country; if so, the steps proposed to meet the same;

(c) whether coffee board will seek for this purpose new and suitable areas in Andhra Pradesh; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) The Coffee Board will be supporting a special package scheme to expand coffee cultivation in 3000 ha. of area in Andhra Pradesh during the Ninth Plan by providing a one time grant of Rs. 15,000 per ha. to the prospective tribal coffee growers. Further, for stepping up productivity in the tribal coffee sector, the Board will also be extending the same amount of one time grant for

rejuvenation/consolidation of coffee areas to the tune of 3,000 ha. during the Ninth Plan.

(b) There is no shortage of coffee in the country.

(c) and (d) Coffee Board has already identified suitable areas for coffee cultivation in Andhra pradesh and around 10,000 hac. of area has been brought under coffee till date. The Board has set up necessary infrastructure to support research, extension and developmental activities for coffee in Andhra Pradesh.

व्यापार घाटे में वृद्धि

1230. **श्री रामजीलाल:** क्या **वाणिज्य** मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या यह सच है कि भारत का विदेश व्यापार घाटा पिछले वर्ष की तुलना में 1997-98 के दौरान काफी बढ़ गया है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो कुल व्यापार घाटा कितने का है, और इसके क्या कारण हैं; और

(ग) सरकार द्वारा व्यापार घाटा कम करने के लिए अब तक क्या कदम उठाए गए हैं तथा उनके परिणाम कब तक सामने आने की सम्भावना है?

वाणिज्य मंत्री (श्री राम कृष्ण हेगड़े): (क) से (ग) वाणिज्यिक जानकारी एवं सांख्यिकी महानिदेशालय (डी जी सी आई एण्ड एस) से प्राप्त अनन्तिम आंकड़ों के अनुसार रुपये के रूप में तथा डालर के रूप में वर्ष 1997-98 के लिए व्यापार घाटा निम्नानुसार है:—

वर्ष	मूल्य	
	यूएस डालर मिलियन	करोड़ रु०
1997-98	6799	25268

व्यापार घाटे को निर्यात की तुलना में अधिक आयात से मापा जाता है। व्यापार घाटे में वृद्धि पूंजीगत वस्तुओं, कच्चे माल तथा मध्यवर्ती वस्तुओं के अलावा मुख्य रूप से उर्वरकों के आयात से हुई है। इनकी आवश्यकता औद्योगिक उत्पादन और निर्यातों को बढ़ाने के लिए थी, जो कि गतिशील अर्थव्यवस्था की एक मूल विशेषता है। व्यापार घाटे को कम करने का मूल सिद्धांत निरन्तर निर्यात वृद्धि में निहित है। इसे प्राप्त करने के लिए देश की निर्यात वृद्धि को बढ़ाने के लिए सरकार द्वारा निरन्तर निर्यात संवर्धन उपाय किए जा रहे हैं। इनमें शामिल है निर्यात अनुकूल वातावरण उपलब्ध कराने के लिए नीति उदारीकरण तथा प्रक्रियाओं का सरलीकरण। निर्यात संवर्धन उपाय, व्यापार, उद्योग और सरकार द्वारा स्थापित निर्यात संवर्धन संगठनों के साथ लगातार बातचीत के आधार पर प्रारम्भ किए गए हैं।

Setting up of a National Export Council

1231. DR. MOHAN BABU: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Confederation of Indian Industry has called for setting up of an apex National Export Council to develop a country specific strategy; and

(b) if so, the steps taken to renew the thrust on exports?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE):

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government has initiated a number of policy initiatives to boost exports. The external trade sector of India has been further liberalised with the changes introduced in the new Exim Policy. The existing export incentive schemes have been strengthened while an effort is being made to evolve new strategies for accelerated growth of exports. Procedures are constantly being simplified and sector specific issues are being addressed vigorously to deal with sectoral constraints.

Suggestions by CII to Boost Exports.

1232. SHRI JAYAPRADA NAHATA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the suggestions made by the Confederation of Indian Industry to boost exports; and

(b) the measures proposed to boost at least 15% growth in exports?